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ABSTRACT

After-school programs help to improve student academic achievement, keep children safe after school, keep children out of trouble, and build self confidence. This pamphlet summarizes the benefits of after-school programs, provides suggestions for locating a program, and delineates features of quality programs. The pamphlet also briefly describes four effective after-school programs and provides suggestions for parents on getting involved in their community to improve the quality of after-school programs. Finally, the pamphlet delineates organizational and Web site resources and provides a postcard to be used to obtain additional information on after-school programs. (KB)

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after-school programs

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communities and schools working together

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how do after-school programs help?

After-school programs help children soar beyond expectations by celebrating their individual skills and talents. Specifically, they:

Improve academic achievement. Quality after-school programs provide an excellent opportunity to increase learning, improve grades and attendance, and reduce dropout rates.

According to a three-year evaluation, students in LA's BEST after-school program made academic gains way beyond those of students who did not attend the program.

Keep kids safe. About 29 percent of all juvenile offenses occur on school days between 2 p.m. — when young people begin to get out of school — and 8 p.m. Children also are at a much greater risk of being the victim of violence after school. Quality after-school programs help minimize this threat by providing responsible adult supervision during non-school hours in a safe setting. In Waco, Texas, juvenile crime has dropped 10 percent since middle school students in that city began participating in the Lighted Schools program.

Keep kids out of trouble. After-school programs provide young people with positive alternatives to drug, alcohol and tobacco use, and other high-risk behaviors. A study in the journal *Pediatrics* found eighth-graders who were unsupervised for 11 or more hours per week were twice as likely to abuse drugs or alcohol as those under adult supervision.

Build self-confidence. Children who participate in after-school programs have the opportunity to master new skills, get excited about learning and develop a sense of belonging. Research shows that these youth behave better, handle conflict more easily, and improve their social skills. They also benefit from the increased attention of caring adults.

where can i find after-school programs?

Schools. Keeping schools open as community learning centers maximizes the use of these public resources, some of which are now open only a portion of the day.

Nonprofit youth organizations. Many partner with schools to provide programs. Among the best known are: Boys and Girls Clubs, Campfire Girls, 4-H, YMCAs and YWCAs, Scouts, and Junior Achievement.

Churches or other faith-based organizations.

what to look for in a quality after-school program:

Is the program in a safe and secure setting, such as a school?

Is it designed to meet the unique needs of the community, youth and families?

Are parents and other community volunteers welcome and involved?

Does it offer homework, tutoring and fun learning activities that build on the regular school program, such as computer skills, art, music and recreation?

Is it kid-friendly?

Is the staff supportive and professional?

Is the community involved?

Is it affordable and available?

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programs making a difference

Alliance Schools Initiative, Texas. With strong parental and community involvement, Sam Houston Elementary School in McAllen, Texas created an after-school enrichment program that provides job training and career development to more than half the school's 520 students. Test scores are up 20 percent and more youngsters are showing an interest in college, even though many of their parents barely finished high school.

New York, New York. The YMCA of Greater New York, along with the New York City schools and the United Way of New York City, is bringing extended school services to 10,000 students in 200 of the city's under-served public schools. The Virtual Ys serve children in grades 2–4 from 3 to 6 p.m. Students take part in the Y's traditional curriculum – the spirit, mind and body triangle – but also in literacy-building activities such as a book club. In addition to professional staff, the program uses college students and AmeriCorps volunteers.

ASPIRA Lighthouse Program, Bridgeport, Connecticut. From karate and dance to math and science, students in the Lighthouse Program's 11 participating schools are keeping busy after school and all summer. The program, which serves students in grades K-12, is staffed by volunteers, including parents, who teach classes, read with children, organize car pools and help with homework. Each site coordinator is a teacher in the school. Police credit the program with a drop in juvenile crime throughout the city. Lighthouse children also performed better on standardized reading and math tests, and their attendance rates are up.

Elementary, Flint, Michigan. An extended learning program created by the principal, teachers and parents in the Carmen-Ainsworth School District is serving 280 students in grades 4-6 who are at risk of dropping out of school. A tutor-supervised computer lab is open before and after school and on Saturdays 4 weeks. During the summer, students attend workshops in reading, science, math and social studies led by teachers, a Title I assistant, the principal and parent volunteers. Funding comes from a mix of federal, state and local sources. Local businesses donate snacks. Test scores at the school are in the 80th percentile – well above the state average.

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Most parents already believe there aren't enough quality after-school programs. about what they're looking for in after-school activities and what they're willing to do to help. Your neighbors may be looking for meaningful ways to share their time and skills.

here's what you can do

Write a call-to-action letter to the editor of your local newspaper.

Set up a meeting with your principal, school board or city council member. Bring up the issue at your school's next PTA or PTO meeting, or with your town's business or law enforcement leaders.

other faith-based organizations and community nonprofits, such as the United Way. Ask to talk about after-school programs at the next school staff meeting. Always go armed with facts, discuss your research and stress that there are many other parents and residents who share your views.

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after-school programs

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_____

Address: _____

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Zip: _____ Phone: _____

E-mail address: _____

I would like more information about after-school programs. I am a:

- ☐ parent
- ☐ teacher
- ☐ principal
- ☐ school administrator
- ☐ member of a community organization or agency
- ☐ community volunteer
- ☐ community leader
- ☐ after-school program staff member or volunteer
- ☐ business leader
- ☐ other

communities and schools working together

for more information

U.S. Department of Education
Phone: (800) USA-LEARN. Web site: www.ed.gov

Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Publications: (800) 645-1766. Web site: www.mott.org

National Center for Community Education
Phone: (810) 238-0463. Web site: www.nccenet.org

Fight Crime: Invest In Kids
Phone: (202) 638-0690. Web site: www.fightcrime.org.

American Business Collaboration
Phone: (617) 278-4000.
Web site: www.amerbuscollaboration.com

National Institute on Out-of-School Time
Wellesley College Center for Research on Women.
Phone: (781) 283-2547. Web site: www.wellesley.edu

Kids Campaign/Benton Foundation
Phone (202) 638-5770.
Web site: www.benton.org

McREL: The Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory
Phone: (303) 337-0990. Web site: www.mcrel.org

Families and Work Institute
Phone: (212) 465-2044. Web site: www.familiesandwork.org

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It's 3 p.m. in America and millions of working parents glance uneasily at the clock. Time to call home and make sure everything is OK. Remind the kids not to go out, not to open the door.

Nearly 28 million school-age children have working parents; an estimated 7 million of them receive no adult supervision after school. Millions of impressionable and vulnerable children whose parents cannot ferry them to a crazy-quilt arrangement of soccer, dance, piano and other expensive activities are left alone or, worse, caring for younger siblings until a parent gets home. As we near the 21st century, schools are being called upon to help bring communities together beyond the traditional school day. In many communities, the expression, "We've never done it that way before," is being replaced with "Together, we can." If your community does not offer after-school enrichment programs, it is time to find out why, and then build the necessary partnerships to create them. Many public and private funders are making after-school programs a priority. New resources are available. The U.S. Department of Education is expanding its 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, and state and local governments are developing similar initiatives. The need for safe, drug-free and enriching after-school activities has never been greater. Communities across America are creating them, helping their children to grow and develop into strong, responsible individuals. This guide will introduce you to the benefits of after-school enrichment programs, what you should look for in them, examples of programs that work and, finally, how you can get involved in your own community.

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